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(54) **CLAMSHELL CARTON WITH TEAR STRIP**

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See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

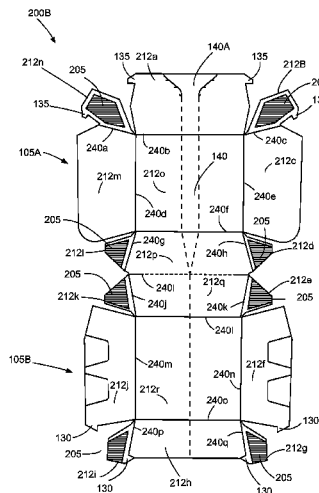
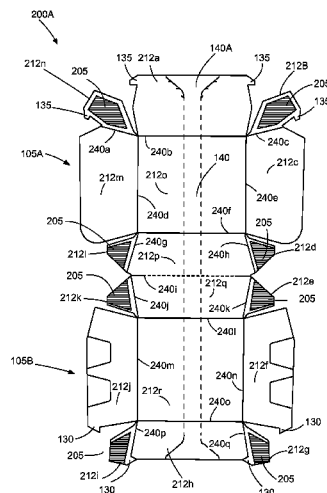
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A carton includes a top portion and a bottom portion. Each
portion includes a front wall, a rear wall, and opposing side
walls extending therebetween. The top portion and bottom
portion include respective top and bottom surfaces. The rear
walls of the top and bottom portions are hingedly connected
to another along respective outer edges. When closed, the top
portion and bottom portion define a cavity for storing an item.
The carton also includes a separation region defined on the
top and bottom portions that extends from an outside edge of
the front wall of the top portion, around the top portion and the
bottom portion, to an outside edge of the front wall of the
bottom portion. The separation region is configured to facili-
tate controlled separation of the carton into first and second
side portions and to prevent liquid flow through separation
region.

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10 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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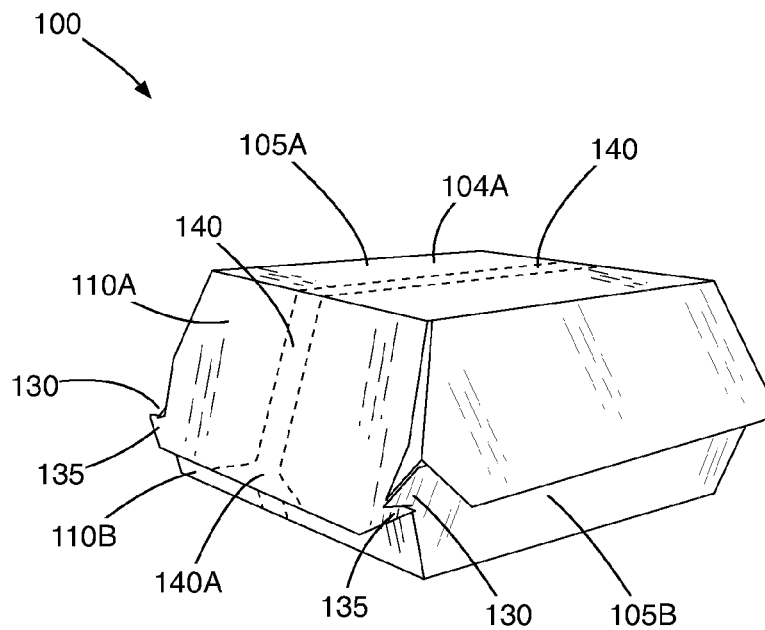


Fig. 1A

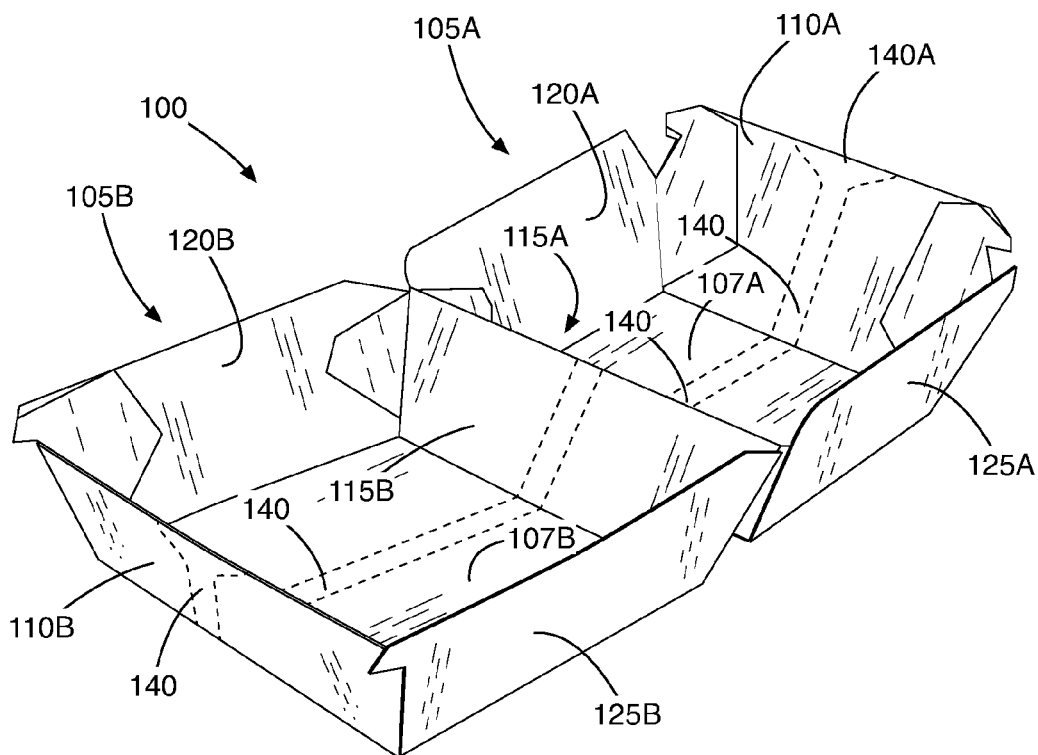


Fig. 1B

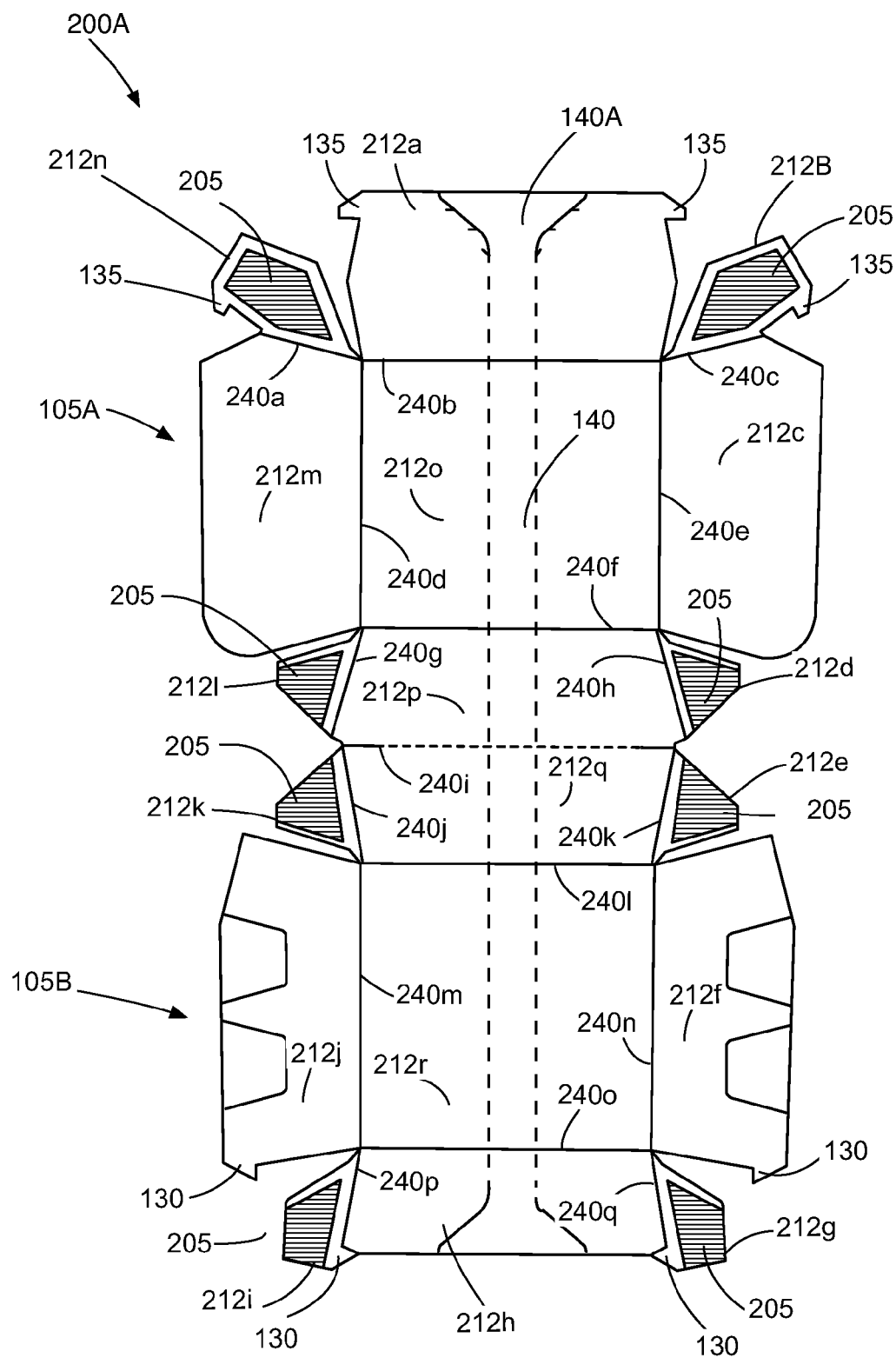


Fig. 2A

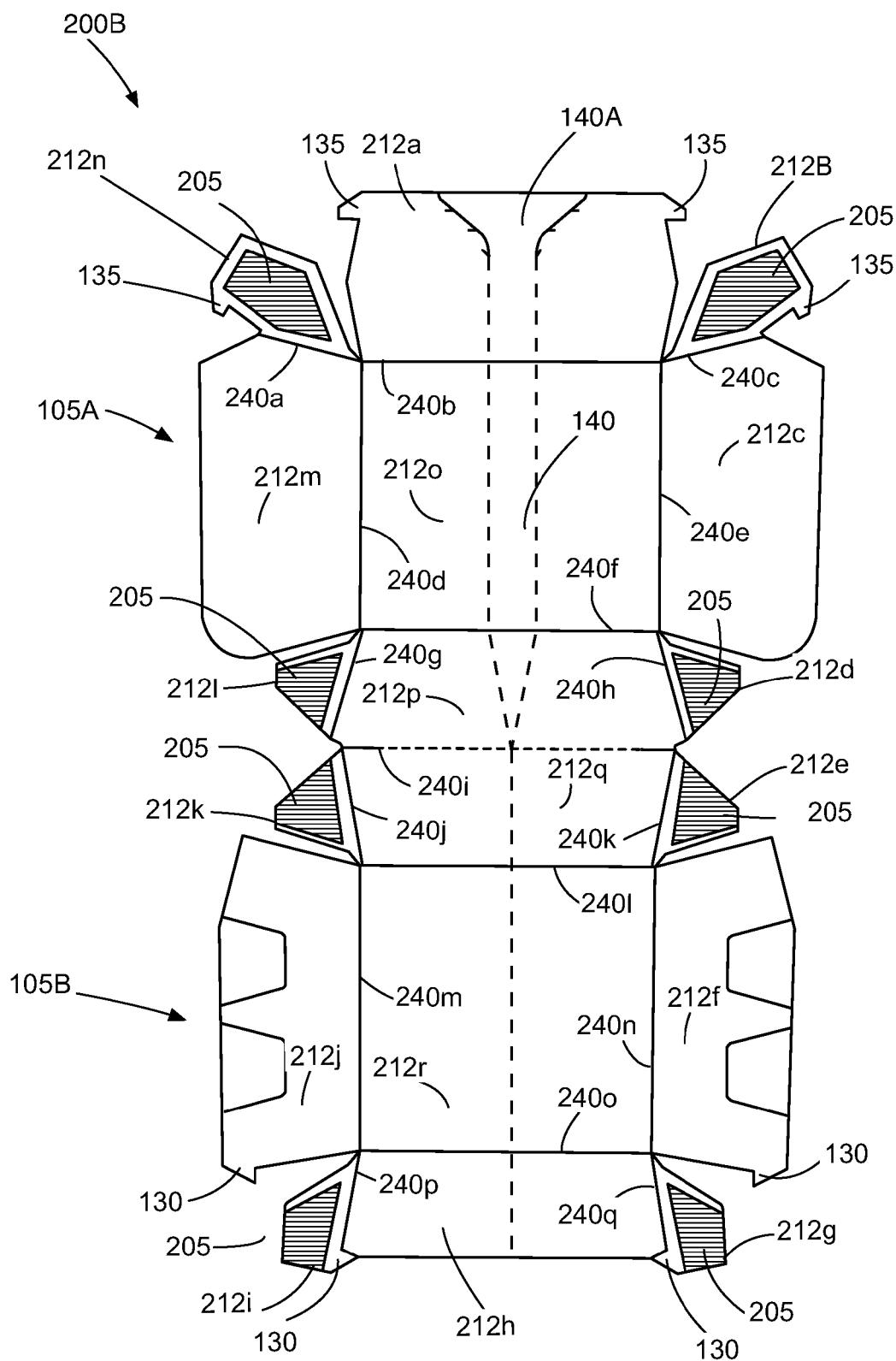


Fig. 2B

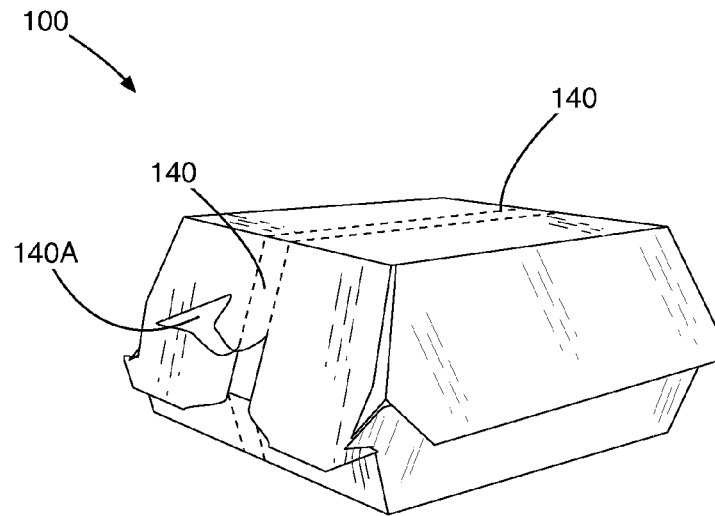


Fig. 3A

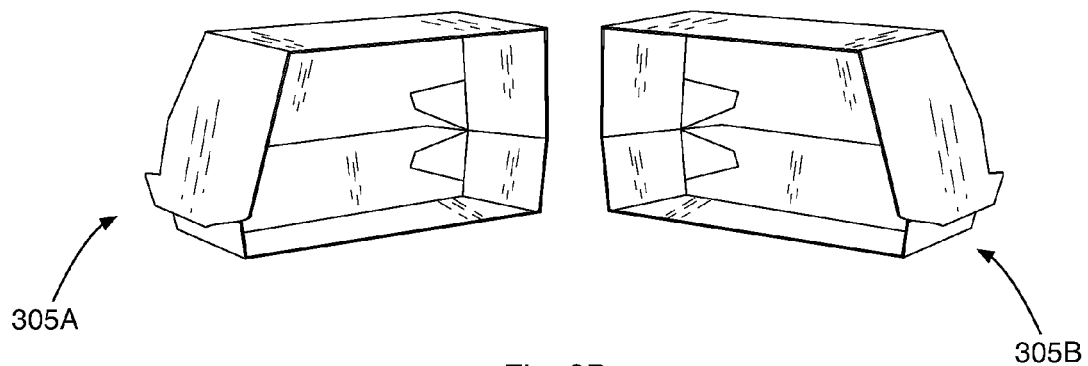


Fig. 3B

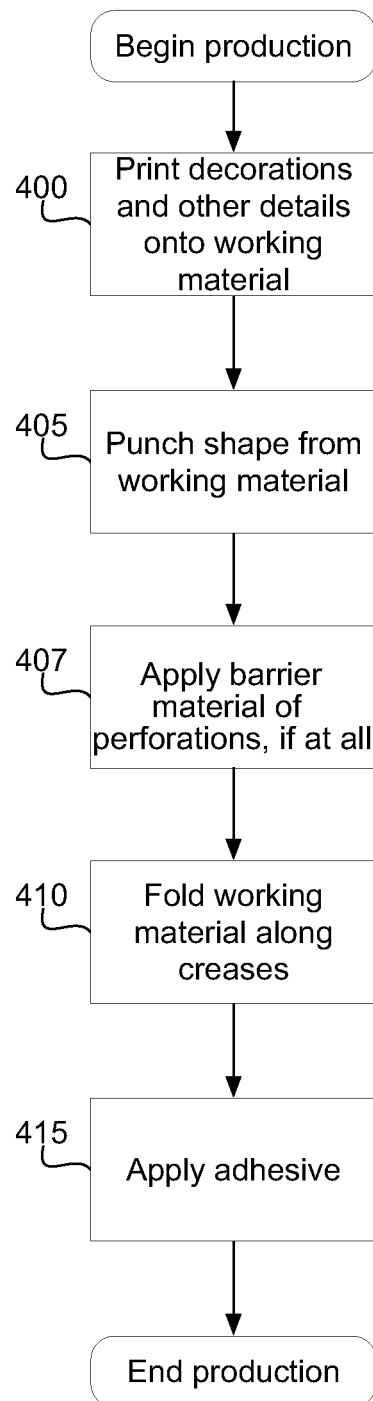


Fig. 4

1

CLAMSHELL CARTON WITH TEAR STRIP

BACKGROUND

Clamshell cartons are utilized in food service industries to hold various food items, such as hamburgers and hot dogs. Typical cartons are made from cardboard. Printing may be provided on one side of the carton to identify the food item within the carton.

During normal usage, a server may place a sandwich, hamburger or other food item into the carton and then close the carton. A consumer typically removes the food item by reaching around the side of the food item and into the carton to grasp the bottom of the food item.

BRIEF SUMMARY

In one aspect, a carton includes a top portion and a bottom portion. Each portion includes a front wall, a rear wall, and opposing sidewalls extending therebetween. The top portion and bottom portion include respective top and bottom surfaces. The rear walls of the top and bottom portions are hingedly connected to another along respective outer edges. When closed, the top portion and bottom portion define a cavity for storing an item. The carton also includes a separation region defined on the top and bottom portions that extends from an outside edge of the front wall of the top portion, around the top portion and the bottom portion, to an outside edge of the front wall of the bottom portion. The separation region is configured to facilitate controlled separation of the carton into first and second side portions and to prevent liquid flow through separation region.

In a second aspect, a method for manufacturing a carton includes providing a planar material. The material is cut to remove excess material. A separation region is formed along a major axis of the cut planar material. The separation region is configured to facilitate controlled separation of the carton, when assembled, into first and second side portions and to prevent liquid flow through separation region.

Other features and advantages will be, or will become, apparent to one with skill in the art upon examination of the following figures and detailed description. It is intended that all such additional features and advantages included within this description be within the scope of the claims, and be protected by the following claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The components in the figures are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon illustrating the principles of the design. Moreover, in the figures, like-referenced numerals designate corresponding parts throughout the different views.

FIGS. 1A and 1B are perspective views of an exemplary carton that includes a tear strip in both closed and open configurations;

FIGS. 2A and 2B illustrate exemplary plan views of first and second planar sheet embodiments that may be formed into the carton of FIGS. 1A and 1B;

FIGS. 3A and 3B illustrate removal of the tear strip and separation of the carton into left and right portions; and

FIG. 4 is a flow diagram illustrating exemplary operations involved in the production of the carton.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The exemplary embodiments below describe a food carton that includes an integrated tear strip feature. The tear strip

2

facilitates vertically parting the food carton into two halves. The tear strip may include a group of perforations. A barrier material may be applied over the perforations to prevent liquid from flowing through the perforations. After parting, a consumer may grasp a food item stored therein in a manner that minimizes the likelihood of his hands becoming messy.

FIGS. 1A and 1B illustrate perspective views of a clamshell carton **100** in both closed and open configurations. The carton **100** includes a top portion **105A** and a bottom portion **105B**. Each portion (**105AB**) includes a front wall **110AB**, a rear wall **115AB**, and opposing sidewalls (**120AB** and **125AB**). A top surface **107A** and bottom surface **107B** extend respectively between the walls of the top portion **105A** and the bottom portion **105B**.

The top portion **105A** and bottom portion **105B** are hingedly attached to one another along a shared top edge of the rear walls (**115AB**). The front wall **110A** of the top portion **105A** and the front wall **110B** of the bottom portion define, respectively, a pair of outwardly extending fingers (**130** and **135**) that extend from respective edges of the front walls **110AB**. The fingers (**130** and **135**) are configured to engage one another to secure the top portion **105A** and bottom portion **105B** of the carton together and thereby maintain the carton **100** in the closed configuration of FIG. 1A.

The tear strip **140** is defined along both the top portion and bottom portion **105AB**. The tear strip **140** extends between outside edges of the front walls **110AB**. That is, the tear strip **140** is defined along the front wall **110A**, top surface **107A**, and rear wall **115A**, of the top portion **105A**, and the front wall **110B**, bottom surface **107B**, and rear wall **115B** of the bottom portion **105B**. A pull-tab **140A** is provided on the section of the tear strip **140** that is defined on the front wall **110A** of the top portion **105A**.

FIGS. 2A and 2B illustrate exemplary plan views of first and second planar sheet embodiments **200AB** that may be formed into the carton **100** of FIG. 1. The sheets **200AB** may be cut out from a larger sheet of material, such as a corrugated paper material, cardboard, paperboard, plastic or any other material that may be creased, folded and bonded, as described above, that is suitably rigid for storing food items.

Referring to FIG. 2A, the sheet **200A** includes a series of creases **270a-q** that define a plurality of planar regions **212a-r** that define the carton **100**. Also shown are a series of regions **205** to which an adhesive may be applied. The adhesive is utilized to bond the plurality of planar regions **212a-r** to one another. During production, the planar regions **212a-r** are folded about the creases **270a-q** resulting in the assembled carton configuration shown in FIG. 1A. For example, referring to FIG. 1A, the front surface **110A** of the carton **100** in the assembled configuration includes the three planar regions **212abn**, shown on the top of FIG. 2. In this case, the right and left upper planar regions **212b** and **212n** are disposed behind the center planar region **212a** when the carton **100** is assembled.

Each of the three regions **212abn** includes locking finger regions **135** which, when assembled, correspond to the locking fingers **135**, shown in FIG. 1. Similarly, the bottom three regions **212ghl** include locking finger regions **130** which, when assembled, correspond to the locking fingers **130** extending from the bottom portion **115** of the carton **100**.

As illustrated, the tear strip **140** is generally defined along the major axis of the sheet **200A**. The outline that defines the tear strip **140** may correspond to a pattern of repeated $\frac{1}{16}$ inch segments that are separated by a $\frac{1}{16}$ inch perforation. The length of the segments and the perforation between them may be different. For example, the segments may be $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or a different length. The distance between the segments

may be $\frac{1}{32}$ inch or a different distance. Factors to be considered when determining the length of the segments and the distance between them include the desired ease with which the tear strip can be removed, the loss of structural integrity that results from the perforations, and possible seepage of juices through the perforations. The various dimensions above have been determined to optimally balance these considerations.

To further limit or prevent seepage through the perforations, a barrier coating may be applied over the perforations to prevent seepage of liquids (e.g., water, oil, grease or sauces) contained in the food items. For example, a barrier coating may be applied over the perforations. Such a barrier coating effectively seals the perforations without adversely affecting the ease with which the tear strip **140** may be removed.

In alternative implementations, creases or partial scoring of the working material may be utilized rather than or in combination with the perforations to control the separation of the tear strip. For example, creasing and partial scoring of the working material may be provided in those regions where juices are more likely to seep, such as one or more of the front wall **110B**, bottom surface **107B**, and rear wall **115B** of the bottom portion **105B**.

The width of the tear strip **140** may be generally uniform across the length of the sheet **200**. For example, the width may be about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. As illustrated in FIG. 2B, in alternative embodiments, the width of the tear strip may be about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, along a section of the sheet **200B** that corresponds to the top portion **105A** of the carton **100**, and then taper into a single perforated or creased section along a second section of the sheet **200B** that corresponds to the second portion **105B**.

As illustrated in FIGS. 3A and 3B, the tear strip **140** facilitates controlled separation of the carton **100** along a vertical parting line through the carton **100** into left and right portions **305AB**. Separation is accomplished by pulling on the pull-tab **140A** section of the tear strip **140** until the tear strip is completely severed from the left and right portions **305AB**.

During normal usage, a server may place a sandwich, hamburger or other food item into the carton **100** and then close the carton **100**, as illustrated in FIG. 1A. As illustrated in FIG. 3A, a consumer may open the carton by pulling on the front wall **110A** of the top portion. Alternatively, the consumer may rotate that carton so that the tear strip **140** is generally horizontal and then remove the tear strip **140** by pulling on the pull-tab **140A** until the carton **100** separates into the left and right portions **305AB** illustrated in FIG. 3B. Because the carton was initially rotated, the open side of the left portion **305A** will be facing upward, and about half of the food item (e.g., hamburger) will protrude above the open side. The consumer may then place the left portion **305A** of the carton **100** on a counter and proceed to remove the food item. In the case of a hamburger, sandwich, etc., the consumer may remove the food item while grasping only the outside portions of the food item (e.g., buns, slices of bread). That is, the consumer can remove the food item without getting the condiments on his hands, which can tend to happen with conventional clamshell cartons which require the consumer to reach around the side of the food item and into the carton to grasp the bottom of the food item. Alternatively, the consumer may simply grasp the left portion **305A** of the carton and eat the portion of the food item that protrudes from the open side thereof. This is particularly advantageous for food items that drip juices or condiments. Thus, the carton **100** provides a more cleanly eating experience. This in turn saves the food service cost in terms of cleanup. For example, fewer napkins are necessary. This also results in less trash and is, therefore, friendlier for the environment.

FIG. 4 is a flow diagram of exemplary operations carried out during the production of the carton **100** of FIG. 1. At block **400**, decorations and other details may be printed on the form. For example, a description of a food item carried in the carton and nutritional information may be printed on the form. In addition, prize information may be printed on the prize information tab.

At block **405**, an unassembled carton form is punched from a larger piece of working material. For example, the carton form may correspond to the carton form **200** shown in FIG. 2. The punch may simultaneously cut out material that is not needed, crease the working material to define regions of the carton, and perforate or crease the working material to define the tear strip, as described above.

At block **407**, a barrier material may be applied to at least the perforated areas of the tear strip to prevent liquid from flowing through the perforations.

At block **410**, the various regions defined in the form may be folded along the creases to provide the carton **100** shown in FIG. 1B.

At block **415**, an adhesive may be applied to various regions of the form. The adhesive may be utilized to bond the various regions to one another.

While the carton and method for assembling the carton have been described with reference to certain embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes may be made and equivalents may be substituted without departing from the scope. For example, the carton described above may be utilized for items other than food. In addition, the operations in manufacturing the carton may be done in a different order. For example, decorations and other details may be printed on the carton form after the carton form is punched from the working material, or the glue dots may be applied earlier than the other operations.

In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings without departing from its scope. Therefore, it is intended that the present method and system not be limited to the particular embodiment disclosed, but that the method and system include all embodiments falling within the scope of the appended claims.

We claim:

1. A carton comprising:

- a top portion that includes a front wall, a rear wall, and opposing side walls extending therebetween, and a top surface extending between inside edges thereof;
- a bottom portion that includes a front wall, rear wall, and opposing side walls extending therebetween, and a bottom surface extending between inside edges thereof, wherein the rear wall of the top portion and the rear wall of the bottom portion are hingedly connected to another along respective outer edges of the rear walls, wherein when closed, the top portion and bottom portion define a cavity for storing an item;
- a separation region comprising a tear strip that extends from an outside edge of the front wall, along the front wall, top surface, and rear wall of the top portion, to the rear wall, bottom surface, and to an outside edge of the front wall of the bottom portion, the tear strip defined by a pattern of repeated uncut segments that are separated by a perforation, wherein a width of the tear strip is uniform across the front wall and top surface of the top portion, then tapers to a narrower width at the top edge of the rear wall, to facilitate controlled separation of the carton into first and second side portions; and

5

a barrier material that covers at least the perforations to prevent liquid from flowing through the perforations, to prevent liquid flow through the perforations of the separation region.

2. The carton according to claim 1, wherein each of the first and second side portions include an entire sidewall of the top portion; a section of the front wall, top surface, and rear wall of the top portion; an entire sidewall of the bottom portion; and a section of the bottom surface, top surface, and rear wall of the bottom portion.

3. The carton according to claim 1, wherein a length of the uncut segment is about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch and a length of the perforation is about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch.

4. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the carton comprises a corrugated paper material.

5. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the carton is formed from a single sheet of material.

6. The carton according to claim 1, wherein the carton comprises a corrugated paper material.

7. A method for manufacturing a carton, the method comprising:

providing a planar material;

cutting the material to remove excess material;

forming a separation region corresponding to a tear strip

along a major axis of the cut planar material, by forming

a pattern of repeated uncut segments that are separated

from one another by a perforation, where the width of

the tear strip is uniform across one or more surface

sections that correspond to a front wall and a top surface

of the assembled carton, and wherein the tear strip nar-

rows across a surface section that corresponds to a rear

wall of the assembled carton; and

applying a barrier material over the perforations to prevent liquid from flowing through the perforations,

6

wherein the separation region is configured to facilitate controlled separation of the carton, when assembled, into first and second side portions, and to prevent liquid flow through the perforations of the separation region.

8. The method according to claim 7, further comprising: creasing the planar material to define a plurality of fold lines that define different planar sections of the carton; folding the planar material along the fold lines to thereby provide an assembled carton, wherein the carton includes: a top portion that includes a front wall, a rear wall, and opposing side walls extending therebetween, and a top surface extending between inside edges thereof; and a bottom portion that includes a front wall, rear wall, and opposing side walls extending therebetween, and a bottom surface extending between inside edges thereof, wherein the rear wall of the top portion and the rear wall of the bottom portion are hingedly connected to another along respective outer edges of the rear walls, wherein when closed, the top portion and bottom portion define a cavity for storing an item, wherein the separation region is further defined on the bottom portion and further extends from the top portion, through the bottom portion and to an outside edge of the front wall of the bottom portion.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein each of the first and second side portions include an entire sidewall of the top portion; a section of the front wall, top surface, and rear wall of the top portion; an entire sidewall of the bottom portion; and a section of the bottom surface, top surface, and rear wall of the bottom portion.

10. The method according to claim 7, wherein a length of the uncut segment is about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch and a length of the perforation is about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch.

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